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**The Iowa Blind History Archive
History of Blindness in Iowa - Oral History Project
Interview with [Name]
Conducted by [Name]
[Date]
Transcribed by [Name]**

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

**Adrian Verbrugge, age 79, Dakota City, Iowa
Meredith Ferguson
Iowa Department for the Blind
7-29-2011**

Meredith Ferguson: This is Meredith Ferguson and I'm interviewing Adrian Verbrugge and...

Adrian Verbrugge: I can't pronounce it myself! (Laughter)

Ferguson: I'll spell it. It's A-D-R-I-A-N and then last name is V-E-R-B-R-U-G-G-E. Just so we have that on record. Adrian, could you give me your...where you currently live?

Verbrugge: Well, I live in Council Bluffs. Originally, came down from Humboldt; Dakota City north of Fort Dodge. And my youngest brother still lives up there.

Ferguson: Okay. The interview is taking place at the Iowa Department for the Blind in Des Moines, Iowa. The date is July 29, 2011 and the time is 3: 06 pm. This interview is part of the Iowa Department for the Blind's History of Blindness in Iowa, Oral History Project. Adrian, for the record do I have your consent to record this interview?

Verbrugge: Sure, yes.

Ferguson: Okay, thank you. To start off, could you state your age and your place of birth?

Verbrugge: I'll be...Dakota City, Iowa is where I was born; north of Fort Dodge. And I'll be 80 in November, I'll put it that way. (Laughter) So, I'm 79 now, 80 in the winter.

Ferguson: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

Verbrugge: I got, well, three other brothers. My oldest brother, he was 83. He passed away in 2005 at age 83, and the second older brother out in San Jose, California, Gene, he doesn't like Iowa climate, so he's never been back for a visit. (Laughter) And then the third brother, Bob, who's; Gene

was 87 and Bob is 84. He's up in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, retired from, oh what do you say, like, Iowa Western Community College or the junior college type teaching. And, then my youngest brother takes care of our farm up in Humboldt, Dakota City, up there. Bill is his name, and he's a year and a half younger than I am. He'd be about 78.

Ferguson: My next question was, are you currently employed, but I'm guessing you're retired?

Verbrugge: No, no I'm retired. I was self employed over the last number of years doing yard work, snow scooping and companion work-type things like that. Otherwise my commercial work wasn't overly great. You know, working for other people didn't seem to last very long.

Ferguson: Oh yeah? Okay, well, one of my first questions is, you mentioned that you are legally blind. Could you explain what happened?

Verbrugge: Well, I had congenital cataracts and then, oh about 20 years ago or so, then I developed Glaucoma. And instead of both eyes I get it, in the only good eye I had left, in my left eye. And so, I use eye drops to stabilize it. And I noticed my vision seems to be, in my left eye, seems to be a lot more poorer. So, I use my right eye to read. I can still read standard print, but I use my right eye now because seems like my left eye is a lot more dim. But, nothing they could do outside of the eye drops for the Glaucoma.

Ferguson: And, how long has it been like that?

Verbrugge: Well, I was born with that, the congenital cataracts, yeah. The Glaucoma came on years ago for some reason; just instead of both eyes one eye; (Laughter) so kind of ironic.

Ferguson: Did your congenital cataracts, is what you called them. Did that affect you growing up?

Verbrugge: It must have. I mean, when I was born with it, well, then I...what was it years ago they thought I...the doctors thought I should have gone to Vinton, to the sight saving school at that time. But, you know, in those days it seemed like the parents wanted their children home, so I went to public school. I wasn't all that great of a student. I was about a, I think, a D to an F student. Even in junior college I was still sort of a D and F student. I tried. I didn't graduate, but I gave it a shot.

Ferguson: What...was that because you couldn't see very well, or is that...?

Verbrugge: Well, partly I guess and intelligence, too. (Laughter) I guess I was very poor in Math. My father, he could figure things out in his head, but boy I do it on paper, and even then...

Ferguson: So, you went to public school in Dakota City?

Verbrugge: Yeah, Dakota City, and then Humboldt for high school, and then Eagle Grove Junior College; but I didn't graduate. Up where Liz came from, is the Gold Field area North-Central Iowa.

Ferguson: You say you didn't graduate, but what did you go for?

Verbrugge: I guess, it was Liberal Arts I tried. I was going to major for being in music or so, but I never learned to read music so I went into theater. Then I kind of got involved in theater, especially down in the Omaha area. I got involved in a lot of theater productions, like the play houses and such that way, and did that. But I wasn't...just mediocre. I enjoyed that. And, I could learn to memorize lines better than I could music.

Ferguson: Oh, whatever works! So you didn't go to Vinton.

Verbrugge: No. Now they say Vinton is closed, is that right?

Ferguson: Yeah.

Verbrugge: Well, how long ago has this been?

Ferguson: Just a few months, now. That was very recent.

Verbrugge: What did the school do with the buildings and stuff? What took over then?

Ferguson: I haven't heard really. I'm not sure what they're doing.

Verbrugge: I was only down there once on a bus tour.

Ferguson: And, you said you didn't go to Vinton mainly because your parents...

Verbrugge: No, because they thought I should be in public school, you know. It seemed like in those days parents always wanted their children home, I guess. So I just went to public school.

Ferguson: It wasn't...it wasn't like any kind of, like, stereotype against Vinton? Was it just...?

Verbrugge: No, not that I know of. I don't recall having anything against me in, or caning or anything like that. I never heard people say four eyes or google eyes, or anything like that I know of, that I remember.

Ferguson: So, you had a pretty easy, laid back childhood?

Verbrugge: Seemed like it.

Ferguson: Okay. Did you have any interaction with the, it would have been the Commission then wouldn't it, the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

Verbrugge: Not until, well, 1959 is when I really got active. You know, '59, when Dr. Jernigan was here.

Ferguson: How old were you then?

Verbrugge: Let me see, I was 30...I was 29. I was born in 31, so I'd be about 29 then. And, Dr. Jernigan and I didn't seem to have a good relationship towards last. I was here as a,

well, I was a combination employee as well as a student when we started out. It was in 1961, basically. I did have a little hand in 1959, but then in '60 was kind of inactive. But, in 1961 I became more active, and so they put me on the staff in the maintenance department and I worked nights.

Ferguson: Here at the building?

Verbrugge: Yeah, here at the building. And so, but Dr. Jernigan and I didn't seem to have a very good relationship. I was here two years, and theoretically, students were only supposed to be so long. I guess, it depended on whether you got your training or not. As an employee I would have been on longer. But, somehow it seemed like Dr. Jernigan... They missed some important state documents, and Dr. Jernigan seemed like he accused me of taking, stealing, the documents and taking them. I said, "Well, no I don't know anything about your documents." Even though I took care of the office, you know, cleaning it and this and that. And I said, "I didn't take any documents that I know of." "Well," he said, "They're missing and we think you took them." Well, then several month...so he fired me; he let me go, you know. He said, "You're no longer a student here anymore and you're fired. You're not going to work for us." So several months later, then they found the documents, but he never apologized or never called me and never apologized. So, we never had, really, a good relationship. I tried to get reinstated again, like in 1963. I went through the senators and representatives to get to be a client, you know. It seemed like I couldn't seem to get on my own even with the VR. Vocational Rehab. didn't seem to pursue it, so I would go through the senators and representatives. And he said,

“Well, boy, you’re always going through a senator or representative to get back on the course here.” And I said, “Well, that’s what they’re there for.” Well, of course, he didn’t reinstate me. So, from 1963 up until Dawn took over as Counselor. Well, I wasn’t active with the Commission.

My Counselor at that time was Harold Carter. And he didn’t have too good of a relationship with Dr. Jernigan in a way either. He was my Counselor out of the Council Bluffs area. And then when he finished up here at the Commission, the last I ever heard years ago he went up to Canada. Well, whether he’s still around or not, I don’t know. But anyway, then I was living here in Des Moines still connected with the Commission as such, and off and on in ‘63. Well then he said, “Well, if you can find a way down here to Council Bluffs, I’ll try to help you find work.” Well, I never cared for this area down here, but I thought, well all right, I guess I could come down even though I don’t like it. And hopefully I wouldn’t find anything. I wanted to be in Des Moines or Minneapolis, or so. So, I grabbed a Greyhound bus, and came over; and this was on a Friday night, and got over here...or Friday afternoon, evening. And, one of the department stores in Council Bluffs was down town. And I thought, well, looks like they’re a big department store by the name of Beano’s. They might need somebody, but I don’t know whether I want to go in or not. I really don’t care to live here. But anyway, I went in and thought, well, I’ll see if they got a job open or...And they did. They had a maintenance job, and they wanted me to start work on Monday morning. I said, “Well, my goodness I got to come from Des Moines. Give me a week or two.” “No, we want you Monday morning.” So, I brought everything over on, like, Friday night. Went back and got it and brought everything

over, over the weekend. Started work for them. And, I was only there about three months, and they said, “Well, you don’t see good enough to clean, especially when you work from midnight to eight o’clock in the morning to clean windows.” And, how do you wash windows at night. (Laughter) There were eight floors in that department store, to cover all them. So, that lasted about three months.

Ferguson: And they let you go because?

Verbrugge: Yeah, they let me go.

Ferguson: Because you couldn’t, they said, because you couldn’t see?

Verbrugge: I couldn’t see good enough to do the work and cleaning it fast enough. And so, I didn’t have the money to come back to Des Moines. So, then I went to work for a printing company in Omaha, and bussed over there; you know, took city busses over there and back. Did that for two years in the downtown area; I was a messenger boy, just delivering parcels and messages, you know, in the downtown area of Omaha. Then they moved further out where there wasn’t any bus service, so the truck driver he took over on that. He did all the delivery work. Then I went to work for Jennie Edmondson Hospital in Council Bluffs. Worked for them for about two years doing maintenance work and handling their store room for delivery, and doing tray line, you know, in the kitchen to deliver meals to the patients. And, there again, they said, “Well, you don’t see good enough to do that, and to do the book work,” and, “You’re not fast enough,” and, “You don’t see good enough

to clean.” So they let me go there. Well, then I got on my own, you know. I did yard work and snow scooping, and companion work; and I did that ever since.

Ferguson: By companion, what do you mean?

Verbrugge: Oh, being a companion, doing shopping and errands and stuff like that for people that I knew and who met me; and then plus yard work and snow scooping. And, I did that all by hand. I didn’t see good enough for power equipment. So, I did that over the years, and I really enjoyed that, even though it wasn’t much. So, that was about the extent of it. Well, then about the late ‘70s or early...well, then Dawn was our case worker over there, and she got me reenacted with the Commission here again. And I said, “Well, I didn’t have a good relationship.” Of course, I knew Dr. Jernigan was gone then.

Ferguson: When was that? That you started, really.

Verbrugge I think it was probably back in the, oh, late ‘70s early ‘80s, because then Dawn was our case worker. And, then she wanted me to be put on the committee here. And, I said, “Well, boy, I have trouble finding drivers. I got enough trouble getting local drivers, let alone getting across the state.” “Well you seem to be the only one available.” So, here I am. (Laughter)

Ferguson: So, how are you involved with the Department now? What committee are you on?

Verbrugge: Well, I'm on this Independent Living thing, Advisory Board I guess you'd call it. So, that's how I'm connected, I guess. And, Becky just called the other day to see if I wanted to be re-upped for another two years. I don't know how long I've been on now. Oh, maybe ten twelve years or longer than that. I've kind of forgotten.

Ferguson: Could you explain, kind of, what you do?

Verbrugge: Well, I guess we come over here for the meetings, you know, to give input about our community areas. And, I haven't attended the local chapters of our blind too much. But, to give input about what the community does, or what we can do for the community with our blindness, or something along that line. And, then they teach you, work with you on your, oh, household skills or job skills if you need a job, or so. And, basically, that's sort of what it amounts to. I don't know if I'm contributing anything or not. (Laughter)

15:00

Verbrugge: Anyway, I'm on the board so I come on over. And as long as I'd be able to get drivers, well I guess I do it. So, I guess that's about the extent of it.

Ferguson: So, you've been involved off and on with the Department over the years. Did you attend the Orientation Center at all?

Verbrugge: Yeah, that's when Dr. Jernigan was here then. That's when I attended, you know. Of course, they were just

first starting out. So I got involved in the wood working, you know, and such that way, and house keeping. But because I was terminated as an employee so quick, well, then I was out of that. But, at least I gave it a shot. At least I got a, I mean, a trial basis out of it. But, because we didn't have that good of relationship, well, I never held. I mean, I didn't dislike him for that, you know, but it just kind of struck me that he never really apologized. Of course, I know when they're in that position, they got so much on their mind, you know, when you're director...that whatever comes about...I didn't give much thought, you know, forgiveness that way. I never gave it any thought to speak of to get excited about it.

Ferguson: Did you...So, you went to wood working. Did you learn any other skills that kind of stuck with you?

Verbrugge: Well, when we did the house keeping or the Home Ec. department area. Did that, and that was about the extent of it.

Ferguson: What kind of skills did you learn that help you to help you out around the home?

Verbrugge: Well, theoretically, like cooking or cleaning. And now, when I was on my own I never followed through doing all that. I don't even hardly boil an egg; hardly for cooking. And even house cleaning; I'm not that great of a house keeper. And, but anyway, that's what the skills were here to kind of give you a shot at it. And so, that's about the extent of it; nothing exciting.

Ferguson: Do you find that...Do you use any of the skills on a daily basis at all?

Verbrugge: Oh, yes and no, I guess. I, you know...I guess it's a yes and no answer; hit and miss.

Ferguson: I noticed you don't carry a cane.

Verbrugge: No.

Ferguson: Is that a personal choice?

Verbrugge: Well, I just never thought about it. And I have a bending cane, but it broke, so I use a straight cane. And basically, I use them in strange areas. I've been told I should use it more often, but so far I've just gotten by, you know. And I don't walk as much going up town like I used to, you know. When I'd shop, well, I'd walk all the way up to the grocery store. It was about three miles. But now, I don't do that much cooking or shopping, so I don't walk that far. And my land lady, she lives out at Wal-Mart, so I ride with her if I need any groceries, like you know, bread and milk. So, I don't get...And I don't like to cook anyway. And I eat out quite a bit. And that way I don't...I just never picked it up. My mother trained me, but I didn't pick it up. (Laughter)

Ferguson: Your mother trained you?

Verbrugge: Yeah, she trained me how to cook, but I didn't pick it up. I just didn't pick it up.

Ferguson: So, is it fair to say you do...you're pretty independent?

Verbrugge: Yeah.

Ferguson: You do a lot of stuff on your own?

Verbrugge: Yeah pretty much. I never married. And the girls I would go with, they'd have to drive for me, unless they wanted to ride a bus, walk, or take a bicycle. So, that never came about too much. That didn't discourage me. I didn't get upset about that, and it didn't bother me. And so, I just knock on or go along. (Laughter)

Ferguson: I want to get back to your involvement with the Independent Living Advisory Board. You've been doing that, what would you say, ten or twelve years?

Verbrugge: I think so.

Ferguson: Okay, how often do you guys meet?

Verbrugge: It seems like we meet about every, well, I think it's every two months. Let's see May, June, July. Okay, so we meet about six times a year, apparently. Yeah, every other month, I think, our...this is this meeting, so I think our next meeting will probably be in September. And let's see, yeah, it would be in September about six times a year.

Ferguson: And, just for the listeners who won't know that much about Independent Living, could you maybe explain or

just kind of give like a brief little overview of what Independent Living is?

Verbrugge: Well, I guess it's basically to work with the older people. Well, not necessarily, but the majority of us are older, and learning, oh, like household techniques. You know, how to do cooking or using different appliances, or marking things for blindness, you know. And then for those that want to be employed, I guess, they work with them on job training and learning how to get along on job training, to go out and seek employment. Basically, I guess that's about what it amounts to. I don't see much else.

Ferguson: No, that's fine; that's good. And, do you currently have a Counselor or?

Verbrugge: Well, Dawn covers that area down there, so I guess we do see each other. And, she works with our local chapter, even though I'm Vice President of the local chapter, but I guess I haven't really been that active.

Ferguson: Of the local Independent Living?

Verbrugge: Blind chapter.

Ferguson: How long have you been President?

Verbrugge: Oh, I suppose seven or eight years.

Ferguson: Okay, do you remember how you got involved with that?

Verbrugge: Well, I guess there again they appointed me, voted me in, even though I never thought about it. And it isn't that far away from where I live that I can walk down. They meet at the senior center in Council Bluffs. It isn't that far away from where I live down town, so I can do the walking there if I go. I probably should be more active, but I hit and miss there, too. (Laughter) Of course, Dawn lives in Omaha, too, so that way she can cover the territory.

Ferguson: Do you find the local chapter or the board meetings helpful at all for you?

Verbrugge: Well, I...there again it's a yes and no. To me it seems like its more social oriented.

Ferguson: Yeah, it's a way to keep you active and involved with people.

Verbrugge: Yeah socialize, I guess. And most of them are older, and they're in their 80s and 90s. And, I guess it's more social, to me, it seems to be more social oriented, which, I guess, is what the groups are all about.

Ferguson: Yeah, I mean, to me it would seem a good way to get people together who are dealing with similar experiences, and talk things out.

Verbrugge: And, we meet once a month. In fact, I guess they had a meeting last week, and I thought it was supposed to be next week. (Laughter)

Ferguson: Was...So, you've been President for six or seven years, you said?

Verbrugge: Yeah, something like that.

Ferguson: Were you involved in any kind of chapters or boards before that?

Verbrugge: No, because we didn't, like in Humboldt and Dakota City, they didn't have one. I don't know whether Fort Dodge had one at that time or not, but I probably would have had a problem getting to Fort Dodge by the Greyhound busses even then, so just basically down here.

Ferguson: I'm just curious in general, like, how you got involved with the Department and how you got involved with the chapters and the boards. Did you, like, by word of mouth?

Verbrugge: Well, it was sort of. And then, I guess, with the Department, it seemed like that came about, like in 1959, when they first started out. When my folks retired from the farm I wasn't able to take over, because I couldn't...we lived six miles from town and my driver's license had five, so I couldn't even get into town. Well, then when my youngest brother took over our farm he went to crop farming. See, Dad and I did livestock, and I would have gone into dairy farming if I could have stayed on, but because I couldn't get around...Well, then when they retired, why then my youngest brother took over and he said, "I don't need you." Well, then later when the folks moved into town, I did too. And then somehow that came about where the Vocational

Rehabilitation out of Fort Dodge. Well, then they said, “Because you’re blind, we’ll turn you over to the Department for the Blind and try to get a representative up here to talk to you to get you involved.” That’s how it came about. Then get involved, of course. That’s when Dr. Jernigan was here then, and at that time, well, there was even a different Counselor then. Well then, at that time he lived over in the Waterloo, Cedar Falls area. Well, of course, then he...I think he was only here two or three years, at that time, and he left. Well, then that’s when this Mr. Carter came in, and then he was my main Counselor at that time.

Ferguson: Oh, Harold Carter, yes.

Verbrugge: Yeah, Harold Carter, he was at that time. And then, of course, when he left, eventually, then I don’t know who was in between him and Dawn, because I was inactive after that. But now when Dawn came, why then she somehow got my name, so I got reactivated. (Laughter)

Ferguson: So, I’m kind of interested in hearing more about the...Since you were here in the early years of when the Commission, or the orientation was really getting started, because not many people are still around from the early years.

Verbrugge: I guess Shirley Wiggins is one of the original ones. She was even here before I was; that’s what she said.

Ferguson: Yes! We interviewed Shirley Wiggins; that was good.

Verbrugge: So she and I, I guess, are about the only charter members left, so we're told! (Laughter)

Ferguson: You mentioned that you and Jernigan, personally, didn't have a good relationship.

Verbrugge: No.

Ferguson: Do you remember him? Was he a fairly popular fellow, or was the Orientation Center a popular idea at that time?

Verbrugge: I guess he was, because he was here a good 20 years or more, and then some reason, however, he left under duress, or whatever the commotion was; something about the building or the operation or so. Well, then from there he went out to Baltimore to head the National Federation for the Blind. So, he was there until he passed away, but that was my understanding or my impression, that whatever happened. But, he was here one of the longest directors they had, and he did a good job, I mean, I admit that he got the thing rolling, you know, for the blind. And got them on the road to not have any discrimination, you know, or to revamp the blind, you know, where they'd get jobs or training or whatever. Otherwise Iowa, I guess, was on the low scale. Back early, in the early days, they were on the lower end of the scale, but when he took over, why it brought it up to the top.

Ferguson: Yeah. Do you remember really experiencing a difference in all...in how the Orientation Center, or how the

Department was viewed. I mean, after Jernigan came here, and the Center really got started?

Verbrugge: Yeah.

Ferguson: Do you remember? Was it more like a, more of a positive light shown on the place?

Verbrugge: Well, I guess it was at that time. Anyway, it seemed like we had a number of students here. I even, well, no. I guess I didn't stay here in the building. I didn't live here. I just lived just a couple blocks below the Civic Center over here, or the Veterans' Auditorium, I was on the river front there on Second Avenue. And of course, I would have stayed there, but then urban renewal came through at that time, and, of course, the people I was living with as a tenant, well, they had to move. And, of course, about that time I was finished up here with the Commission, so that's when I went over to Council Bluffs. But I guess, it was a positive attitude, or it seemed like, because he kept things going and kept things running, and whoever came along.

Ferguson: One of the popular themes in the interviews that we've done is that there was more of a positive light towards blindness or visual impairment.

Verbrugge: Well, I guess. And somehow I never got involved that way, to know one way or the other to really answer that question, but as far as I was concerned. And, of course, I don't, I don't know where. I don't drive or mix. I'm not much of a social orienteer, I guess. I don't get around that much to be socially oriented, apparently. My youngest brother,

because he went to college and got a degree, you know, he was more social. Of course, he could drive too, you know, and get around. And so, I guess, I didn't socially orient in a sense, even with the ones that were here at that time. I didn't get involved with them too much. I guess I was involved in my own thing, or whatever I was trying to do.

Ferguson: You mentioned discrimination earlier. Have you ever personally experienced discrimination?

Verbrugge: Not to my knowledge, no not really. Even in school I don't really recall in public school or college that I was discriminated against, or ever said much about it; maybe other people, but not for me anyway.

Ferguson: Do you remember did the teachers ever try and work with you?

Verbrugge: Well, in public school they always had a black...they had the...had a student desk on the side of the teacher's desk, close to the blackboard, so that I could see the blackboard. I could read the blackboard all right. It was just a matter of figuring the stuff out, like mathematics. (Laughter) I wasn't all that smart even though I could read the blackboard. I still wasn't that good of a student, but I managed to graduate. I did get a diploma.

Ferguson: Did you feel you were ever treated any differently by the other students at all?

Verbrugge: No, not to my knowledge. I think I was just a regular individual. That I recall. I don't think I ever had any

name calling or anything like that even, so that I know of. Of course, maybe being a smaller community might have made a difference.

Ferguson: That's true. That might have played into it, yeah. You mentioned that you can still read regular print. Do you do a lot of reading?

Verbrugge: Well sort of, I try. I guess I like to read. I don't seem to get many books read. It seems like it's the news papers or the Reader's Digest. And even then I skip, so I just get the headlines read, is about all, I guess, when I'm in and out.

30:00

Ferguson: Do you use our library services at all?

Verbrugge: Well, now, they sent me that digital cartridge player. So I use that. Otherwise, I still have the old fashion one, the old cassette tapes. I do use that. Before that I never bothered to have them ever sent me one. I didn't come across... I just never thought about it. I always listened to the radio quite a bit. I always enjoyed the radio, or even television. Of course, I sit about a foot away from the television screen to see it comfortably, even a 42 inch screen. And I watch Public Television quite a bit. That's the only two stations I watch. On the border line you can catch Nebraska and Iowa, just like in northern Iowa, Minnesota and Iowa. And so, I find Public Television, as far as I'm concerned, the best programs that I watch. That's why I hardly get the headlines of the papers read. (Laughter)

Ferguson: You've mentioned you've held quite a variety of jobs over the years. Do you have an opinion on how job opportunities have changed for the blind?

Verbrugge: No, not really, because there again I was pretty much self employed doing yard work and snow scooping and stuff that way that I don't know that. I've had other people do that, of course, where I couldn't see to use power equipment. I always did it by hand, and so I didn't interact with anyone else that way as such so in that respect.

Ferguson: Is there any other way that you've been involved with your community, other than participating in your local chapter?

Verbrugge: Well, not really. No, not really. I go out on some of these fundraisers that for donations, you know. If I can get a ride or if they're close enough in where I can get to and from the fundraising, I go that route. But, I mean, I don't...I'm not involved as far as doing the fundraising, but I go as a donator.

Ferguson: Who...what's the fundraising for?

Verbrugge: Well, like they got down there in the Council Bluffs Omaha area, there's one called the Heartland Family Services where they service the homeless, you know, or help them out, kind of like the Salvation Army type thing. And as long as there's a couple people that are on the board I can ride with them to get to where the fund raising is, and I go along. Otherwise I say, "Well, if you want me to donate, if

you got a way that I can get to and from without having to backtrack. I don't want you to go out of your way." Well, some do, some don't. But I do it that way, you know; dinner and entertainment. (Laughter) That's the way I've donated is where I get dinner and entertainment then. Then you know where it goes.

Ferguson: Is there anything that you do for leisure? I mean, you mentioned, you said, you like to read when you can or listen to the radio.

Verbrugge: Yeah, read or television, or listen to the radio. That's about it. I used to go to the movies, but then when I had to walk home after dark, and then as the movies changed the style, why, I haven't done that for a long time. And so, I just more or less stay. And I've gotten older, so I just more or less stay put. (Laughter)

Ferguson: I wanted to clarify, can you see better when there's sunlight?

Verbrugge: Well, I like cloudy weather better. It seems like it's a lot easier on my eyesight. It seems like the bright...even the bright lights, like your fluorescent lights up here, in a way kind of bother some. I should wear a billed cap, but that doesn't help, so I go along like this. That seems to work the best.

Ferguson: So, it's either bright lights or when it's really dark then that bothers?

Verbrugge: Aha.

Ferguson: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that. Have you been involved with any advocacy groups for the blind over the years?

Verbrugge: Not really. No, not really.

Ferguson: Never been involved with, oh, the...

Verbrugge: Well, I come over here for the conventions once in a while, when they had the state convention when I had a way over.

Ferguson: State conventions for?

Verbrugge: For the blind, you know. The state convention that meets here in May, I guess, they come here.

Ferguson: Is that the NFB?

Verbrugge: Yeah. And I did that a couple of times. Other than that I don't...I haven't gotten involved, even with church activities I haven't...I used to be involved. Then the churches I went to, when they moved on or moved out, well, then I didn't get involved that way. I didn't have a way to and from the church, and I couldn't seem to get rides. I guess, I'm just more or less independent.

Ferguson: Was that the reason you didn't get more involved with the organizations?

Verbrugge: Yeah, I think that would be it.

Ferguson: Okay.

Verbrugge: Because sometimes it was a big problem getting around. And I, you know, in a way it didn't bother me any. I kind of enjoyed it, this way being independent; and come and go when I wanted. And didn't have to get involved, and maybe that's wrong.

Ferguson: Everybody's different, whatever...

Verbrugge: Whatever suits you, I guess; if it fits. And I haven't had anybody say anything about it.

Ferguson: Just one last question from me. Do you use technology a lot?

Verbrugge: No, not really. No.

Ferguson: You don't use any aids and devices?

Verbrugge: People say I should have a computer. Well, if I had a need for one I probably would, but I don't. I don't do that much, you know, on a computer scale. I wore a manual typewriter out. I write long handed. No, I've never gotten involved that much with technology. Our Aids and Devices here, well, I use the magnifying glass. In fact, I had to get another one today because the one I had, I dropped it on the floor and, of course, the light broke and the light thing. And so, I couldn't seem to get it fixed, so I just got another one then, and hopefully that will serve for a magnifying glass.

Ferguson: How long have you used a magnifier?

Verbrugge: Oh, I suppose a good ten or fifteen years.

Ferguson: Okay, so you didn't use those when you were growing up at all?

Verbrugge: No, not too much. And even the bifocal glasses, well, I use them you know, and I can read that way. Get bifocals and sun glasses; I got the same thing there with the bifocal. I haven't seen where my sun glasses, even though I can read with them, I haven't seen where they really change that much for the sun, you know, to shine to help out. But I got them, so I do...I remember to wear them then.

Ferguson: That's the end of my questions. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about, any stories that you wanted to share?

Verbrugge: No, not that I can think of.

Ferguson: Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Verbrugge: I can't think of anything else.

38:03

(End of Recording)

Beverly Tietz

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